

The Crafts
Ohio "Black Laws"
Rev. - Higginson

Boston, Massachusetts, Friday
Feb. 2. 1849.

My dear Mr. Estlin,

My thoughts have been much with our good English friends today. I left Concord, N. Hampshire, this morning, nearly an hour before sunrise, & came in 3 hours to Boston - distance 75 mts. - by railroad of course, and since reaching town have been engaged nearly all the day in preparing parcels of the "Liberty Bell", "Bazaar Gazette", & "Annual Report" of the Mass^{ts}. Antisl. Society for our English box, which I design to send on board ship tomorrow. It will go, as I expect, by the "Washington Irving," the regular Boston & Liverpool Packet, and I trust will not be long upon the water. I do not feel that I have anything very interesting to communicate to you, unless on public topics, the knowledge of which will reach you of course before this letter can, but I do not like to lose so good an opportunity of sending you at least a few words. The Ladies of the Bazaar have made up a pretty stout parcel of "Bells" for Bristol, which I have directed to your care. I hope it may find you in good health and enjoying the many blessings which I am sure you

are not insensible to. I have added, to the
other bundle, ^{one} ~~another~~ containing
some copies of our "Annual Report"
(which you will oblige me by distributing), ~~some~~
a further supply of the "Bazaar Gazette" (making
I believe 100 in all to Bristol), and I have put in
one or two little articles, in the shape of a book,
a pamphlet or two, which I hope may amuse you.
If you have never seen a copy of the "American
Almanac" (now in its 20th year), I think you will
be pleased with the arrangement, & contents generally,
of the Number for 1849. It may be of some service
to you. The "Panorama" from top of Bunker Hill
Monument I send because it will give you quite
a good idea of the position of Boston, relative to
the towns & country around it. The spot on
which it stands is, or rather was, a peninsula
connected to the main-land by a narrow "Neck," often
covered by the tide at high water; this latter however
has not been the case, within my memory. On both
sides, the sea has been shut off, the low places left
filled up, streets laid out, so that upon the peninsula
now are ^{it is affirmed} ~~at least~~ twice the number of square acres

that were found here 200 years ago. Seven bridges connect ~~the~~ Boston proper with the cities & towns which lie on the shores opposite & around it. In addition to these, seven Railroads (mostly by means of bridges) pass from the City in all directions, & connect it with ^{all} the other N. England States, with the interior of our own State, & with the great Railroads & Canals of the State of New York, by means of which easy, cheap & rapid communication ^{is had} with the most Westerly States of the Union. But I had no thought to inflict all this upon you. If Boston were as awake & truthful to other interests, as she is to her commercial & temporal interests, it would be a city worthy of honour, & where one might be thankful to live. But so it is not! far, very far otherwise is it. Boston is a glorifier of the Southern Man-stealer, of the Slaveholding Man of Blood, & of his most supple & willing tools. Her great men ~~men~~ are the Cotton Lords - the Cottonspinners & the Cotton Mill-owners, and they are in close & perfect alliance with the most extreme & arrogant of the Slaveholders. Boston is verily "joined to her idols," and her character for stern moral principle deteriorating.

Boston stands in dishonorable contrast with the rest of the State of Massachusetts, which will not bow so generally nor obsequiously to the Slaveholders demands, and has in repeated instances resisted them successfully.

The Annual Meeting of our State Society, held last week in Faneuil Hall for 3 successive days, was a very spirited & harmonious meeting. The interest was much heightened by the presence of two young Slaves, who by an extraordinary effort of self-command & fearless daring, achieved an escape from the very heart of the oppressor's country an escape, which, had it been ^{made} by State prisoners, or Captives to a heathen or savage power, would have been heralded to all readers with all the aids & appliances ~~of~~ which the pens of the readiest and most gifted writers could furnish. Ellen Craft, the young wife, is a woman who may well be called beautiful; she has no trace of African blood ^{discernible} ~~apparent~~ in her features - eyes, cheeks, nose or hair, but the whole is that of a Southern-born white woman. To think of such a woman being held as a piece of property, subject to be traded off to the highest bidder, (while it is in reality no worse or wickedness than when

done to the blackest woman that ever was) does yet
stir a community brought up in prejudice against colour
a thousand times more deeply than could be ~~for~~ effected
in different circumstances. She was a ^{living} ~~striking~~ proof
that Slavery has no prejudice about colour, and is as
ready to enslave the whitest & the fairest as any
other, provided only the pretext be afforded. - Wm. Craft
the husband, is a dark mulatto, tall, erect & dignified
in his appearance, of good mind, good judgment in
the ordinary concerns of life, and every way giving proof
of a manly self-reliance & self-respect. He learned
the trade (in Macon, Georgia - pronounced May-kon) of
a journeyman cabinet-maker; he hired his time of his
owner, & let himself to a cabinet-making concern; out
of his wages, he clothed & maintained himself, and
paid two hundred & twenty dollars a year to his owner, ^{besides.}
When they came away - about Christmas time - the
young ~~man~~ woman disguised herself by putting on
the dress of a young Southern gentleman, affected
illness (by rheumatism), & started off in the R. road
cars for Savannah & the North, her husband attending
her as her servant. In 4 days they safely reached
Philadelphia, where they found themselves among friends
and protectors,

Saturday a.m. Feb 3^d.

I must briefly say what remains. My wife desires your daughter's acceptance of a little volume - "Leaves from Margaret Smith's Journal". It is written by John G. Whittier the Quaker Poet and Abolitionist. It is just from the press, and we haven't read it; but portions of it, which have heretofore appeared in the papers, & which my wife did read, pleased her so much that she does not hesitate about sending it. Moreover, Mr. Whittier's name is a guarantee of good.

I send also, for one or two friends, some copies of Rev. Mr. Higginson's Sermon at Newburyport. He was settled there only a year or two since - is a Unitarian - and a true & honest man. It is safe to say that scarce another sermon, from a settled minister, so plainly faithful as this, has been preached from one end of the Union to the other, since the last late Presidential campaign began; & scarce any before.

You have doubtless heard of the Ohio "Black Laws" - statutes of a very stringent kind, designed to prevent the colored people from settling in Ohio & to drive those there out of it. I cannot give you

the exact details of these laws, but they were admitted to be the most severe & oppressive upon the colored people of any State at the North.

~~There were~~ Some of the laws excluded the children of colored people from the public schools; and the testimony of colored men was prohibited from every Court, when & when a white man was on trial. The whole colored population was disfranchised - not even a property qualification was allowed to give a right to vote, as in New York. - Those laws, the Governor of the State ^{has lately} recommended to ^{be} repealed; and the Ohio House of Representatives has voted the repeal by a very great majority - about 44 to 1, I think. The action of the Senate is not yet known. - This shows advance, and, if carried, will be a very great triumph; the laws have been, to some extent, practically disregarded for some years.

The Unitarians of Boston are striving very hard for a "revival of religion", "more spirituality" and the like. When Deacon Grant ^{spoke} ~~got up to speak~~ on Temperance & the Drunkard, and Mr. Spear ~~got~~ spoke on the claims of Discharged Convicts, these were ruled out as "irrelevant", & speakers were deemed

to keep to the subjects before the meeting. These meetings are held every Sunday evening, and there is praying & singing enough to furnish forth any number of Pharisees with an undoubted certificate of "religion".

Mr. Calhoun's Southern Manifesto is another important (public) matter, which you will see at length in the Liberator, and I have now no time to speak of it - especially as I have not read it with care. It arrived in Boston, while I was attending anti-slavery meetings in New Hampshire.

My best regards & respects to your daughter,
and the same to yourself, my dear Sir,
from Yours truly

Samuel May Jr

To
John Bunker Estlin Esq.,
Bristol, England.